



PATENT
Atty. ref. **SAT.P.US0007**
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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In the application of:

LOWE

Appl no.: **10/688,583**

Filed: **October 17, 2003**

For: **MULTILAYER GRAPHIC SYSTEMS**

Group art unit: **1771**

Examiner: **M.D. Matzek**

Confirmation no.: **2259**

REPLY BRIEF

Mail Stop Appeal Brief – Patents
Commissioner for Patents
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A Notice of Appeal was mailed March 17, 2006. This was accompanied by a Pre-Appeal Brief Request for Review (with accompanying 5-page document) which was considered but did not change the status of the application.

An Appeal Brief was mailed May 17, 2006. On July 27, 2006, a Notice of Non-Compliant Appeal Brief (from PTOL-462) was mailed and, in response, a Supplement to Appeal Brief was mailed August 2, 2006.

An Examiner's Answer was mailed September 14, 2006, making the due date for a Reply Brief 14 November 2006. This submission therefore should be deemed to be timely.

While not believed to be necessary, this Reply Brief retains the formatting prescribed for appeal briefs because it references several sections of the previously submitted Appeal Brief.

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I. Real Party in Interest

The inventor, Clifford A. Lowe, remains the real party in interest.

II. Related Appeals and Interferences

No other prior or pending appeals, interferences or judicial proceedings are known to appellant or the undersigned which may be related to, directly affect, be directly affected by or have a bearing on the Board's decision in the pending appeal.

III. Status of the Claims

Claims 3, 5, 7-13 and 19-29 are pending in the application.

Claims 1-2, 4, 6, and 14-18 were canceled during prosecution.

No claims were withdrawn from consideration.

All pending claims stand rejected. Appellant notes that the first page of the PTOL-326 form of the December 19, 2005, final Office Action does not mention claims 28-29; however, these claims are mentioned in the body of the action, and a call between the undersigned and the examiner confirmed that they are rejected.

The following is the summary of rejections which was included in the Appeal Brief:

- Claims 3, 8, 11-12, 19 and 20-24: 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), anticipated by Mueller et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,180,228).
- Claims 19, 5, 7-9, 11-12, 20 and 25: 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), anticipated by Kittel et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,228,486).
- Claims 5, 20, and 25-29: 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), obvious over Mueller et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,180,228).
- Claim 13: 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), obvious over Mueller et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,180,228) in view of Ho et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,468,532).
- Claims 10, 13, and 29: 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), obvious over Kittel et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,228,486).

In the Examiner's Answer, the summary of rejections appears to be as follows:

- Claims 3, 8, 11-12, 19 and 20-24: 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), anticipated by Mueller et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,180,228).
- Claims 19, 5, 7-9, 11-12 and 20¹: 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), anticipated by Kittel et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,228,486).
- Claims 5, 20, and 25-29: 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), obvious over Mueller et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,180,228).
- Claim 13: 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), obvious over Mueller et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,180,228) in view of Ho et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,468,532).
- Claim 10²: 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), obvious over Kittel et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,228,486).

However, in the process of reviewing the Examiner's Answer in advance of preparing this Reply Brief, the undersigned discovered what is believed to be an error that

¹ Claim 25 no longer is included in this rejection.

² Claims 13 and 29 no longer are included in this rejection.

has carried through since at least the final rejection mailed 19 December 2006 (hereinafter "Final Rejection"). Specifically, an application of the Mueller et al. patent to claim 20 was not made in the Final Rejection and was not made in the recently received Examiner's Answer. Thus, Appellant questions whether claim 20 properly is included in the first rejection.

IV. Status of Amendments

The Status provided in the Appeal Brief remains accurate.

V. Summary of Claimed Subject Matter

See the Supplement to Appeal Brief filed 2 August 2006 for a claim-to-specification chart, which remains accurate.

The pending claims are directed to multilayer graphic articles. As recited in independent claims 19 and 25, the claimed multilayer graphic article includes

- a transparent outer protective layer,
- an outer adhesive layer optionally protected by a release liner, and
- a fabric matrix disposed between the two outer layers.

The image is printed *on the fabric matrix*, the outer protective layer is *disposed on and directly contacts* the printed image, and the outer adhesive layer is *directly disposed on the lower surface* of the fabric matrix. Claim 25 includes two additional limitations:

- the fabric matrix is primed on both of its primary surfaces (such that the printed image is on the *primed* upper surface and that the outer adhesive layer is directly disposed on the *primed* lower surface), and
- the transparent outer protective layer includes a textured upper surface.

Where a layered graphic system is applied to a horizontal surface, the graphic system is subjected to many forces that can stretch or tear the system, e.g., pedestrian or automotive traffic. Graphic systems that employ thinner polymeric substrates generally have less structural integrity, which is problematical both in normal use and during removal. Graphic systems intended for temporary use must remove readily from an underlying substrate; a system that tears during removal makes replacement difficult and inefficient.

Appellant elegantly resolved this dichotomy between the desire for thin substrates and the need for structural integrity. By employing a fabric substrate, the claimed multilayer graphic system entails certain advantages over prior systems. First, the claimed article can be very thin because the fabric print-receiving substrate need not be as thick as standard polymeric substrates to provide equivalent strength; this permits easier handling, installation and, very importantly, removal without tearing. Second, fabric substrates can be provided with extremely high quality images utilizing very efficient printing processes.

VI. Grounds of Rejection to Be Reviewed on Appeal

An updated list of issues on appeal are

- whether claims 3, 8, 11-12, 19 and 21-24³ are anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,180,228 (hereinafter the '228 patent),
- whether claims 5, 20, and 25-29 are suggested by (i.e., obvious over) the '228 patent,
- whether claim 13 is suggested by the '228 patent in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,468,532 (hereinafter the '532 patent),
- whether claims 19, 5, 7-9, 11-12 and 20 are anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,228,486 (hereinafter the '486 patent), and
- whether claim 10 is suggested by the '486 patent.

These issues are ordered differently from the rejections included in the Final Office Action for the reason mentioned in the Appeal Brief.

³ Claim 20 originally was included in this grouping but does not appear to have been specifically rejected as anticipated by the '228 patent; see the discussion at pp. 5-6 *supra*.

VII. Argument

As discussed above, the claimed multilayer graphic article includes a transparent outer protective layer, an outer adhesive layer optionally protected by a release liner, and a fabric matrix disposed between the two outer layers. The image is printed on the fabric matrix (which is primed in claim 25). The outer protective layer is *disposed on and directly contacts* the printed image. The outer adhesive layer is *directly disposed on* the lower surface of the fabric matrix (which is primed in claim 25). The transparent outer protective layer includes a textured upper surface in claim 25.

The '228 patent teaches a graphic laminate with a printed image applied to a polymeric substrate.⁴

The '486 patent is directed to a thermal transfer laminate⁵ in which an ink or graphics layer is applied to facestock and overlain with lamina having a variety of purposes.

The remainder of this section is structured so as to discuss each patent and the rejections based thereon together. The '228 patent and rejections based thereon are discussed first, followed by a review of the '486 patent and rejections based thereon.

A. The '228 patent

1. What does it teach?

The graphic laminate from the '228 patent employs a skid-resistant protective layer applied over an image-bearing layer (see lines 8-17 and 43-50 of col. 3 and lines 32-45 of col. 3) thus making it suitable for outdoor use (abstract and lines 44-57 of col. 2).

For ease of reference, Figures 1 and 2 from the '228 patent are reproduced below.

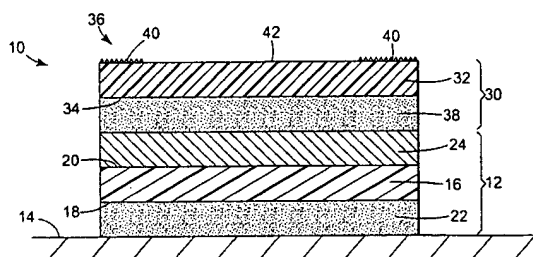


Fig. 1

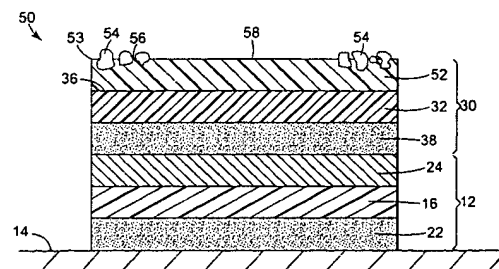


Fig. 2

⁴ See cols. 3, 5, and 6 of the '228 patent, particularly col. 6, lines 30-31 in conjunction with col. 5, lines 16-27.

⁵ Often used as warning labels to automotive interiors; see, e.g., col. 12, lines 37-44 of the '486 patent.

Element 16, the so-called base layer, receives image layer 24; these two elements together are referred to as imaged base component 12. Element 30 is "an image-protective component" which overlies base component 12 and protects image layer 24. Element 22 is the adhesive layer which bonds graphic article 10 to substrate 14.

Element 16 is described as follows at lines 2-27 of col. 5:

[B]ase layer 16 . . . is preferably a sheet of polymeric film engineered to enhance the strength and/or the flexibility of the graphic article. The film selected for the base layer 16 should be flexible and conformable to irregular substrates. . . . The base layer 16 can be transparent, translucent, substantially clear or colored. In addition, at least one major surface of the base layer 16 must be imageable. . . .

Materials suitable for the polymeric film base layer 16 include alpha-olefins such as polyethylene, polypropylene, and blends and copolymers thereof; ethylene-modified copolymers such as ethylene vinyl acetate, ethylene acrylic acid, ethylene methacrylic acid, ethylene methacrylate and blends and mixed polymers of these materials . . . , polyurethanes, poly(vinyl chloride) and rubbery polymers such as ethylene propylene diene monomer terpolymer, rubber modified polyolefins and styrene butadiene rubbers. A particularly preferred material for the base layer 16 is a vinyl film.

In other words, the '228 patent teaches that base layer 16 is a *polymeric* sheet or film of the type typically employed in graphic articles. Polymeric film base layer 16 can be reinforced with a separate layer as described at lines 34-44 of col. 5 (emphasis added):

... [A] surface of the base layer 16, or selected portions thereof, can be reinforced. For example, a thin metal or foil layer, a woven or nonwoven scrim layer, or a layer of fibrous material . . . can be applied to a surface of the base layer with a suitable adhesive, or can be incorporated between two layers if (sic) polymeric film to form a reinforced base sheet-like construction. . . .

Lines 47-50 of col. 5 and lines 30-31 of col. 6 go on to explain that this optional reinforcing layer, when used, is positioned between base layer 16 and adhesive layer 22, i.e., does not constitute part of base layer 16.

2. Rejections based on the '228 patent

a. 35 U.S.C. § 102(b): claims 3, 8, 11-12, 19 and 21-24

The Board is referred to the description in the Appeal Brief, subject to the recently noted failure to specifically reject claim 20.

The only portion of the Examiner's Answer that appears to differ from that which was included in the Final Rejection is as follows:

Final Rejection

Examiner equates the applied film to the instantly claimed fabric matrix and nonwoven fabric matrix. Support for said equation is provided by definitions of “textile film” and “fabric textiles” as provided by www.fibre2fashion.com, which explains that a textile film is a textile material (fabric) and a fabric textile includes nonwoven articles.

Examiner’s Answer

This fibrous material may be incorporated between two layers [o]f polymeric film to form a reinforced base sheet construction (col. 5, lines 38-44). Examiner equates the applied film to the instantly claimed fabric matrix and nonwoven fabric matrix because it contains a fabric between two polymeric layers.

Thus, the improper use of a web site in the Final Rejection has been eliminated.⁶ Nevertheless, anticipation rejections based on the ’228 patent have not been withdrawn. Instead, these rejections now are explained as follows:⁷

6. Appellant argues that optional reinforcement layer is a separate, distinct layer and not part of base layer 16 and that image layer 24 is necessarily separated from the optional reinforcement layer by base film 16, which is taught as receiving the image. Examiner has interpreted the reinforced base layer (fabric matrix or support) comprising a fibrous material between two layers [o]f polymeric film to form a reinforced base sheet construction (col. 5, lines 38-44), because as a laminated product the film layers will conform to the supporting fabric. This results in a “fabric matrix” with a fabric surrounded by polymeric film.

First, this quoted section ascribes as Appellant argument the “separate, distinct layer” characterization. However, the Board is respectfully requested to note that the ’228 patent itself makes this characterization; see the quoted portions of the ’228 patent provided on the preceding page.

Second, the Examiner appears to argue that base layer film 16, when reinforced with a separate scrim layer, forms a multilayer composite in which the film conforms to the scrim so as to form a “fabric matrix.” Appellant notes that the term “matrix” used in claim 19 appeared in as-filed claim 1⁸ as well as, e.g., page 3 of the specification. Without explicitly stating as much, the examiner appears to rely on the maxim that claim terms are to be

⁶ See Section 7 at p. 8 of the Examiner’s Answer.

⁷ Section 6, which bridges pp. 7-8 of the Examiner’s Answer. This argument is restated and/or expanded upon in Section 8 on p. 8 of the Examiner’s Answer. For present purposes, it was not deemed necessary to quote both sections.

⁸ Claim 1 included the phrase “fabric matrix or support”. In his response to the first action in this application, Appellant chose to shorten this phrase to “fabric matrix”. Nevertheless, the structure corresponding to this term remains element 25 from Fig. 1 and the text associated therewith.

given their broadest reasonable interpretations during prosecution; however, Appellant notes that this maxim includes a very important limitation: *consistent with the specification* (see In re Hyatt, 211 F.3d 1367, 1372, 54 U.S.P.Q.2d 1664, 1667 (Fed. Cir. 2000) and MPEP § 2011). The Examiner's interpretation is not consistent with the description of "fabric matrix" in the specification.

Third, the Examiner's interpretation upends the teaching of the '228 patent by indicating that base film layer 16 merely conforms to (optional) reinforcing scrim. Appellant maintains that the Examiner could not have come to this interpretation without the benefit of having seen Appellant's own teaching because, assuredly, the '228 patent itself does not refer to this combination of elements as a "fabric matrix" nor teach that the film-receiving layer "conform[s] to the supporting fabric." Instead, the '228 patent teaches that base layer 16 is the "star of the show" with reinforcing scrim merely an optional afterthought. How was a *circa* 2003 ordinarily skilled artisan to conclude that the '228 patent's base film, when optionally reinforced with a separate layer, really constitutes a "fabric"? Appellant submits that the only logical answer is impermissible hindsight.

b. 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based on the '228 patent alone: claims 5, 20, and 25-29
1. Claims 5, 20, and 25

As noted in the Appeal Brief, claims 5, 20 and 25 are additionally patentable in view of the foregoing. However, the propriety of the specific obviousness rejection remains questionable. Specifically, the examiner pointed to col. 5, lines 60-65 (relating to the types of adhesives useful in adhesive layer 22, located opposite the printed image) and col. 7, lines 36-38 (relating to the types of adhesives useful in adhesive layer 38 which overlays printed image 24, i.e., does not contact base film 16) as motivation for selection of acrylic or urethane resins as primers for the lower surface of the print-receiving fabric matrix.

In the Examiner's answer, these rejections are explained as follows:⁹

⁹ Section 9 at p. 8 of the Examiner's Answer.

Appellant argues that the inclusion of particular resins in a separate adhesive layer does not make obvious their use as fabric layer primers. Examiner contends that it would have been obvious to look to the adhesive layers of the applied invention as guidance as to sufficient compositions to be used as primer layers as primer layers serve the same function as adhesive layers (i.e. improve the bond between adjacent layers).

The common definition of the verb “prime,” from which the term “primer” is derived, is “prepare or make ready for a particular purpose or operation.”¹⁰

If the examiner is correct, then looking to teachings regarding adhesives should make the fabric matrix ready to stick to the ground (element 22) or to a protective layer (element 38). Instead, claim 5 refers to a substance that increases the receptivity of the fibers of the fabric matrix to the inks, pigments, etc., from the printed image, and claim 20 refers to a substance that increases the receptivity of those same fibers to the outer adhesive layer.¹¹

The Examiner again fails to provide any persuasive motivation as to why the ordinarily skilled artisan would look to the '228 patent's teachings on adhesive layers for instruction as to what materials might make fabric fibers more receptive to, respectively, the image layer and the adhesive layer.¹²

2. Claim 29

The Appeal Brief and Examiner's Answer¹³ are believed to adequately apprise the Board of the respective positions on this issue.

c. 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based on the '228 patent in view of U.S. Pat. No. 5,468,432: claim 13

The Appeal Brief and Examiner's Answer¹⁴ are believed to adequately apprise the Board of the respective positions on this issue.

¹⁰ Webster's Unabridged Dictionary (Random House, 2001), p. 1537.

¹¹ The analysis with respect to claim 25 is submitted to be similar.

¹² Query as to why the '228 patent would suggest the use of a substance taught to be useful as base adhesive layer 22 as a primer to make a fabric layer more receptive to a separate adhesive layer. Wouldn't this teaching be better characterized as suggesting the elimination of any layer or substance between the adhesive layer and the print receiving layer, i.e., just use the “primer” as the adhesive layer?

¹³ See Section 10 bridging pp. 8-9 of the Examiner's Answer.

¹⁴ Id.

B. The '486 patent

1. What does it teach?

The Board is directed to the summary provided in the Appeal Brief for a complete review.¹⁵

Element 110 is the facestock (with 118 being a heat-activatable adhesive and 112 being a print-receiving layer), 120 is the graphics layer, 130 is an adhesion-promoting layer, 140 is abrasion-resistant transparent coating layer, 150 is an adhesive layer, and 160 is a carrier sheet.

First layer 112 of facestock 110 "may be comprised of textile including woven and non-woven fabrics made of natural or synthetic fibers."¹⁶

Adhesion promoting layer 130 "is typically composed of a lacquer and a diluent,"¹⁷ and abrasion-resistant coating layer 140 "is made from UV curable oligomers such as epoxies, urethanes, polyester, acrylics, and the like."¹⁸

Adhesive layer 150 is said to preferentially adhere to carrier sheet 160 so that it can separate from coating layer 140 during removal of carrier sheet 160.¹⁹

2. Rejections based on the '486 patent

a. 35 U.S.C. § 102(b): claims 5, 7-9, 11-12 and 19-20

1. Argument applicable to claim 5

While Applicant's responses focused on the failure of the '486 patent to teach independent claims 19 and 25, the rejection of dependent claim 5 also merits reversal. The anticipation rejection in question reads as follows:

¹⁵ As explained during prosecution, Fig. 2 is deemed representative for purposes of discussion. More particularly, the embodiment shown in Fig. 3 employs a facestock that includes upper thermoplastic film layer 220 as a print receiving surface; see lines 42-48 of col. 2. Thus, the embodiment shown in Fig. 2 probably is more relevant to the present discussion.

¹⁶ Col. 3, lines 38-40. Thus, where first layer 112 is "comprised of ... fabrics made of natural or synthetic fibers," graphics layer 120 apparently directly contacts a fabric layer.

¹⁷ Paragraph that bridges cols. 9-10.

¹⁸ In addition to UV curing, cationic curing of certain materials (e.g., epoxies) also is taught.

¹⁹ Paragraph that bridges cols. 10-11.

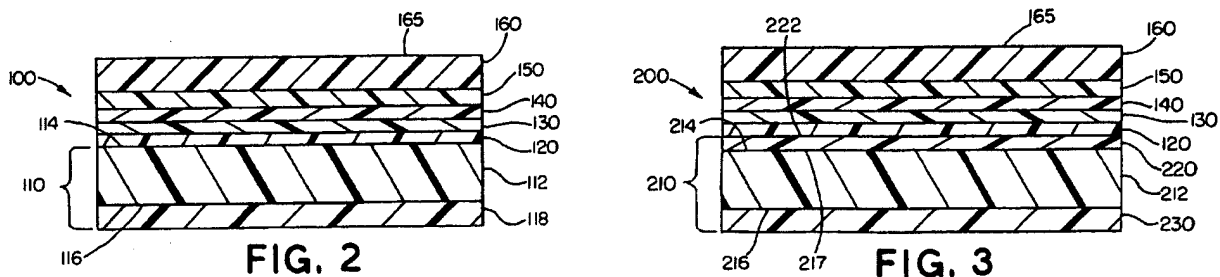
c. Claims 5, 19, and 20 are rejected as tie layers of adhesive resin (primer) may be placed on the upper and lower surfaces of the facestock layer (col. 8, lines 59-61). These adhesive tie layers may comprise polyurethane (col. 9, lines 48-67). The facestock layer (fabric matrix) typically has a thickness of about 1 to about 25 mils or 0.0025 cm to 0.63 cm (calculation performed by Examiner) (col. 3, lines 9-12). The adhesive layer thickness may range from about 0.00025 cm to 0.013 cm (calculation performed by Examiner) (col. 3, lines 15-18).

This rejection is explained, and argument from the Appeal Brief allegedly refuted, by the following:

Appellant is directed to col. 8, lines 59-61,

which specifically states that adhesive resin (primer layers) may be positioned between the core layer (fabric matrix) and either or both film layers for enhancing adhesion. Therefore, this teaching provides for primer layers on both the upper and lower surfaces of the core layer.

Despite the clear explication contained in the Appeal Brief, the Examiner apparently continues to misconstrue the express teaching of the '486 patent. For the Board's ease of reference, Figures 2 and 3 of the '486 patent are provided below:



In Fig. 3, element 220 is *upper thermoplastic film layer*²⁰ and element 230 is *heat-activatable adhesive layer*.²¹ Element 212 in Fig. 3 roughly corresponds to element 112 in Fig. 2.

²⁰ Col. 2, line 44.

²¹ Col. 2, lines 48-49.

The Examiner has referred to a portion of col. 8; lines 54-61 of col. 8 are provided immediately below:²²

The layers 112, 118, 212, 220 and/or 230, may contain a
55 minor amount of an adhesive material to enhance the
adhesion of the layers 112 and 118 to each other, or the
layers 220 and/or 230 to the core layer 212. Also, or
alternatively, tie layers of an adhesive resin can be posi-
tioned between the film layers 112 and 118, or between the
60 core layer 212 and either or both of the film layers 220 and
230 for enhancing adhesion.

This section teaches tie layers only with respect to increasing inter-ply adhesion within the facestock; see, e.g., “enhance the adhesion of the layers 112 and 118 to each other,” “can be positioned between the film layers 112 and 118,” and “between the core layer 212 and either or both of the film layers 220 and 230” (emphasis added). Despite the Examiner’s repeated assertions to the contrary, this passage does not teach or suggest priming the *upper* surface of the *image-receiving layer* so as to enhance its receptivity *to the image*.

Neither this passage nor any other portion of the ’486 patent support an anticipation rejection of claim 5.

3. *Arguments applicable to claims 5, 7-9, 11-12 and 19-20*

The Appeal Brief and Examiner’s Answer²³ are believed to adequately apprise the Board of the respective positions on this issue. Appellant wishes only to note one item regarding section 14 of the Examiner’s Answer, reproduced below:

14. Appellant argues that the use of phrase “an outer protective layer” implies or indicates that the layer in question is unitary and applied in a single process. Examiner has provided his interpretation of the Kittel et al. reference supra, which sets forth a unitary protective layer. The argument of implying that the layer is applied in a single process, it is noted that this feature is not recited in the rejected claim(s). Although the claims are interpreted in light of the specification, limitations from the specification are not read into the claims. See *In re Van Geuns*, 988 F.2d 1181, 26 USPQ2d 1057 (Fed. Cir. 1993).

In the unlikely case that the Board also construes the Appeal Brief as addressing an unclaimed process limitation, Appellant merely notes that, like the

²² Lines 54-58 are provided for context.

²³ Section 2 at pp. 4-5 of the Examiner’s Answer.

function argument that immediately followed it,²⁴ the method of formation argument is directed to showing that the '486 patent treats the two layers in question as being separate and distinct.

In contrast, claim 19 uses the phrases "a transparent outer protective layer" and "wherein said outer protective layer is disposed on and directly contacts said printed image". Appellant believes that a proper construction of claim 19 must be that the single outer layer is in direct contact with the printed image.²⁵

In contrast, in the '486 patent, abrasion-resistant layer 140 is not "disposed on" and does not "directly contact" graphics layer 120, and adhesion-promoting layer 130 is disposed on and directly contacts graphics layer 120 but does not serve a protective function.

b. 35 U.S.C. § 103(a): claim 10

The Appeal Brief and Examiner's Answer²⁶ are believed to adequately apprise the Board of the respective positions on this issue.

Conclusion

The rejections under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102(b) and 103(a) should be overturned.

Respectfully submitted,



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²⁴ Page 21 of the Appeal Brief.

²⁵ The term "outer" provides a spatial reference point that helps to locate the transparent protective layer, and the phrase "directly contacts" precludes any intermediate layers between it and the printed image.

²⁶ See Section 5 (p. 7) and Section 15 (p. 10) of the Examiner's Answer.

VIII. Appendix – Claims on Appeal

3. The article of claim 19, further comprising anti-skid particles attached to or integral with said outer protective layer.
5. The article of claim 19, where said upper surface of said fabric bears a primer layer derived from a composition comprising an acrylic resin or a urethane resin.
7. The article of claim 19, where said fabric matrix is woven.
8. The article of claim 19, where said fabric matrix is non-woven.
9. The article of claim 19, where said fabric matrix includes filaments or fibers.
10. The article of claim 9, where the fibers or filaments comprise polyaramids, polyesters, polyolefins, or polyamides.
11. The article of claim 19, where said fabric matrix has a thickness of about 0.005 cm to about 0.05 cm.
12. The article of claim 19, where said adhesive layer has a thickness of about 0.005 cm to about 0.025 cm.
13. The article of claim 19, where said outer protective layer has a thickness of about 2 mils to about 15 mils.

19. A multilayer graphic article comprising:
 - a) a transparent outer protective layer,
 - b) an outer adhesive layer, optionally protected by a release liner, and
 - c) disposed between said outer layers, a fabric matrix comprising upper and lower surfaces and bearing on its upper surface a printed image,wherein said outer protective layer is disposed on and directly contacts said printed image and wherein said outer adhesive layer is directly disposed on said lower surface of said fabric matrix.
20. The article of claim 19 wherein said lower surface of said fabric bears a primer layer derived from a composition comprising a latex or polyurethane.
21. The article of claim 19 wherein said outer protective layer comprises a polyurethane.
22. The article of claim 21 wherein said polyurethane is provided from an aqueous dispersion.
23. The article of claim 21 wherein said outer protective layer further comprises an acrylic or epoxy component.
24. The article of claim 19 wherein said outer protective layer comprises a textured upper surface.

25. A multilayer graphic article comprising:

- a) a transparent outer protective layer comprising a textured upper surface,
- b) an outer adhesive layer, optionally protected by a release liner, and
- c) disposed between said outer layers, a fabric matrix comprising upper and lower surfaces, said upper surface bearing a primer layer derived from a composition comprising an acrylic or urethane resin, said lower surface bearing a primer layer derived from a composition comprising a latex or polyurethane, said primed upper surface of said fabric bearing a printed image,

wherein said outer protective layer is disposed on and directly contacts said printed image and wherein said outer adhesive layer is directly disposed on said primed lower surface of said fabric matrix.

26. The article of claim 25 wherein said outer protective layer comprises a polyurethane, said polyurethane optionally being provided from an aqueous dispersion.

27. The article of claim 25 wherein said outer protective layer further comprises an acrylic or epoxy component.

28. The article of claim 25 wherein said outer protective layer further comprises anti-skid particles attached to or integral therewith.

29. The article of claim 25 wherein said outer protective layer has a thickness of from about 7 to about 8 mils.

IX. Appendix – Evidence

none

X. Appendix – Related Proceedings

none